

OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY (OPT)  
WEST BANK



## Protection Analysis Update

Update on protection risks faced by men and boys

JANUARY 2026



Palestinian man carries his belongings as he leaves  
Nur Shams refugee camp before Israeli forces  
demolished homes in the camp © Alaa Badarneh

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following protection analysis focuses on men and boys to ensure a comprehensive understanding of protection risks across all segments of the population, recognizing that crises affect people differently based on age, gender and other diversity, and that men and boys face distinct threats and vulnerabilities.<sup>1</sup> This analysis seeks to strengthen inclusion while recognizing the continued, specific protection risks affecting women and girls. It also responds to growing concerns about the broader securitization of gender narratives, which can frame men and boys as threats rather than individuals with protection needs, and seeks to counter reductive assumptions by grounding analysis in protection data.

The protection environment for men and boys in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has rapidly deteriorated since October 2023, shifting from chronic insecurity to **acute and widespread exposure to violence, coercion, and deprivation**.

Palestinian men and boys face a concentrated and interlinked set of severe protection risks. They constitute over 99% of persons held in detention, including children held in indefinite administrative detention with limited legal safeguards, reflecting the systematic targeting of adult men and adolescent boys with deprivation of liberty. Israeli authorities have deliberately imposed detention conditions that amount to torture and other forms of ill-treatment, including growing cases of sexual violence against men and boys, resulting in severe and long-lasting physical and psychosocial harm and, in many cases, death in custody. The excessive use of force by Israeli forces has led to exceptionally high rates of death and injury – 97% men and boys – **indicating systematic unlawful and discriminatory targeting and a process of gendered securitization by Israel whereby male identity is construed to justify resort to force, including lethal force**. Expanding movement and access restrictions, including checkpoints, roadblocks, and closures, function as a compounding risk, limiting men and boys' freedom of movement while intensifying exposure to violence and blocking access to essential services. Across all risks, Israeli forces have exploited gender norms to inflict **dignity-related harm and abuse intended to humiliate men and boys, erode social fabric, and induce displacement** of communities.

These risks are driven by a mutually reinforcing set of threats and stress drivers that together create a coercive and increasingly severe protection environment. Israeli militarized operations have intensified in scale and geographic reach since October 2023, increasingly employing war-like tactics in law-enforcement contexts, particularly in refugee camps and urban centres. In parallel, settler violence has escalated sharply in both frequency and severity alongside rapid illegal settlement and outpost expansion, exposing men and boys to direct physical harm, intimidation, and forced displacement in a context of limited accountability. Deepening economic deprivation, driven by permit revocations, movement restrictions, and asset destruction, disproportionately affects men as primary income earners and increases reliance on harmful coping strategies including child labour among boys. These factors interact with gender norms that compound exposure to harm for men and boys while undermining help-seeking and access to services.

## The protection risks faced by men and boys requiring immediate attention are:

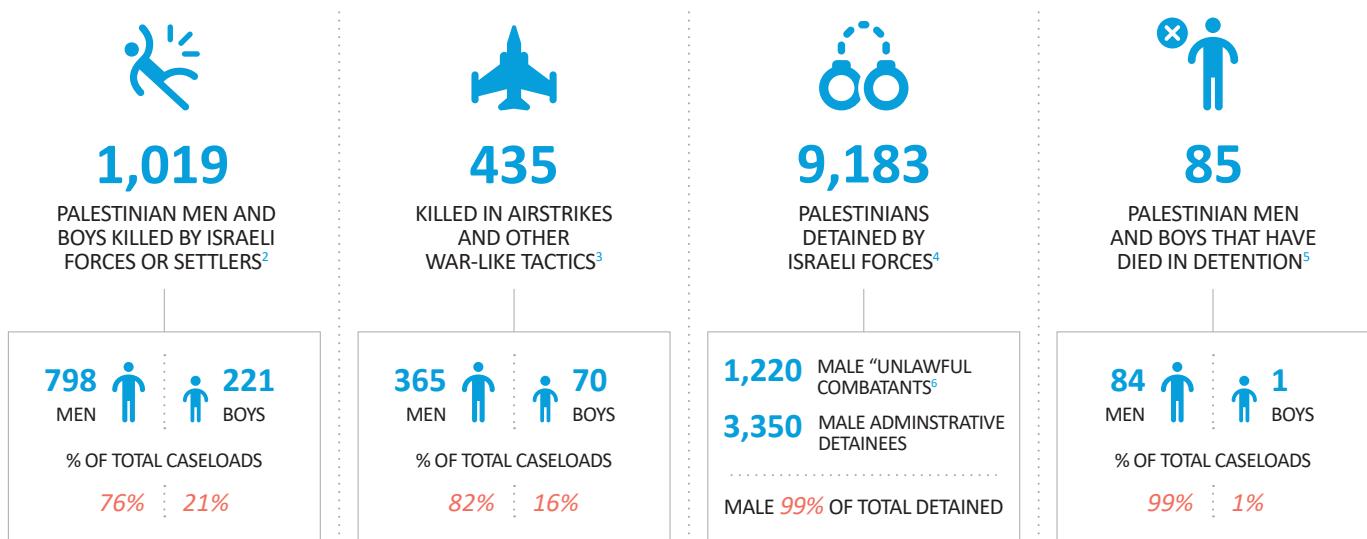
1. Arbitrary or unlawful arrest and/or detention
2. Excessive use of force
3. Torture or cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment
4. Unlawful impediments and restrictions on freedom of movement
5. Psychological/emotional abuse or inflicted distress

## URGENT ACTIONS NEEDED

The convergence of these risks indicates a protection environment marked by gendered patterns of violence and deprivation with cumulative and intergenerational impacts on men, boys, families, and communities across the West Bank. Addressing these risks requires the following urgent actions:

- Coordinated gender, age and diversity-responsive protection action including tailored case management and legal aid, mental health and psychosocial support, and integrated livelihoods interventions to reduce exposure to harm and the growing reliance on negative coping strategies.
- Member States should reject securitized narratives on men and boys and the de facto treatment by Israel of men and boys as combatants or security threats, and acknowledge them as individuals deserving of safety, dignity, and protection.
- Authorities should immediately end administrative detention, including of children, release all Palestinians who have been arbitrarily detained, ensure due process and fair trial guarantees, and ensure the conditions and treatment of detainees meet basic minimum standards under international human rights law.
- Immediate end to Israel's unlawful presence in the West Bank, alongside sustained advocacy to address excessive and lethal use of force, torture including sexual violence, expanding settler violence, and unlawful movement restrictions.

# CONTEXT



Figures from 7 October 2023 to 31 December 2025.

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, 85 per cent of partners providing protection services to men and boys reported a significant deterioration in the protection environment for men and boys during the period from October 2023 to October 2025, and 95 per cent reported either significant or moderate increase in protection risks.<sup>7</sup> When disaggregated by age and disability, protection partner survey results shows that protection risks for men and boys are **heavily concentrated among adolescent boys (14–17) and adult men (18–49)**. Disability significantly amplifies vulnerability to common threats across all age groups, with 63 per cent of protection partners identifying boys and men with disabilities as high-risk groups. While older men are less frequently identified overall, older men with disabilities are consistently noted as at heightened risk due to limited access to services and exclusion.

Survey data shows that Israeli **militarized operations and raids** are overwhelmingly seen as the primary threats driving protection risks faced by men and boys, followed closely by an expanding rate of **settler violence**, all of which interact to create a coercive environment that exposes Palestinians in the West Bank including East Jerusalem to risk of forcible transfer, and men and boys specifically to high risk of violence and abuse. **Economic deprivation**, a contextual factor characterized largely by permit loss and restricted mobility, forces men and boys into unsafe coping strategies, while aid exclusion and limited services for male populations exacerbate vulnerability and restrict options for recovery. Expectations around masculinity – particularly the pressure to protect family property, maintain income, and avoid showing distress – compound exposure to violence and undermine help-seeking, shaping a gendered risk landscape in which adolescent boys and adult men face extreme and increasing levels of physical and mental harm<sup>8</sup> with limited support.

Since October 2023, the key threats and drivers of protection risks to men and boys in the West Bank have rapidly expanded, with the territory seeing a marked intensification and geographic spread of militarized operations by Israel, a sharp rise in Israeli settler violence and outpost growth, large-scale new restrictions on Palestinian movement and access, and deepening economic deprivation. These patterns interact to increase displacement and limit livelihoods, while indicating a shift in the protection environment for men and boys in the West Bank from chronic to **acute and widespread exposure to violence and deprivation**.

<sup>2</sup> Period 7 October 2023 to 31 December 2025. OHCHR, Occupied West Bank: Increased Israeli violence against Palestinians must stop, 2025; OCHA oPt, Casualties Database, period 7 October 2023–31 December 2025. Excludes Palestinians who died in Israeli detention.

<sup>3</sup> Period 7 October 2023 to 31 December 2025. OHCHR, UN Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: 1,001 Palestinians killed in the West Bank since 7 October 2023—one in five are children, October 2025, and OHCHR monitoring database.

<sup>4</sup> Period 7 October 2023 to 31 December 2025. HaMoked, Monitoring and Legal Aid Data.

<sup>5</sup> OHCHR, At least 75 Palestinians have died in Israeli detention since 7 October 2023, September 2025, and OHCHR monitoring.

<sup>6</sup> Israel's Incarceration of Unlawful Combatants Law is a military detention regime which deviates in respect from protections for detainees under international human rights law. "Unlawful combatant", a category which does not exist in international law, is defined in Israeli law as "a person who has participated either directly or indirectly in hostile acts against the State of Israel or is a member of a force perpetrating hostile acts against the State of Israel, where the conditions prescribed in Article 4 of the Third Geneva Convention of 12th August 1949 with respect to prisoners of war and granting prisoner of war status in international humanitarian law, do not apply to them".

## MILITARIZED OPERATIONS

While Israeli forces (IF) periodically carried out militarized operations across the West Bank prior to October 2023, in the period since, **operations in the West Bank have increased in frequency, scale, and intensity**, including more frequent raids, larger operations in refugee camps and urban centres, large numbers of arrests and increased use of war-like weapons and tactics in multiple governorates. This has expanded the geographic footprint of operations and increased casualties, injuries, and damage to homes and infrastructure.<sup>9</sup>

In January 2025, Israeli forces launched operation “Iron Wall”, a large-scale militarized operation in the northern West Bank, causing mass destruction, permanent re-engineering of camp topography, and the forcible displacement of more than 42,000 Palestinians from Jenin Camp, Nur Shams Camp, al-Faraa Camp, and Tulkarm Camp.<sup>10</sup> As of December 2025, nearly 33,000 Palestinians remain displaced, primarily in Jenin and Tulkarm governorates.<sup>11</sup> In November 2025, Israel launched a new large-scale operation in the northern West Bank, focusing on the governorate of Tubas and surrounding towns of Tammun, Aqaba, Tayasir, and al-Fara'a Camp. The operation was expanded in December 2025 with IF conducting raids, house searches, and mass arrests, imposed movement restrictions, and converted homes into interrogation sites.<sup>12</sup> Law enforcement operations by Palestinian Authority Security Forces (PSF) have also expanded in the post-October 2023 period, including operation “Defend the Homeland” which took place between December 2024 and January 2025 in Jenin Camp and surrounds, and was followed by subsequent raids by IF and a crackdown on civic space by authorities.<sup>13</sup> During the operation, PSF imposed a siege on the entrances to the camp, deployed armoured personnel carriers and snipers in Jenin city, and engaged in armed clashes using shoulder-fired shells.<sup>14</sup> As a result, about 2,000 families were displaced from Jenin camp while the remaining 3,400 residents struggle to access basic services.<sup>15</sup>

Militarized operations and raids expose communities and particularly men and boys to severe and multifaceted protection risks. Operations involve the unlawful use of force in law enforcement contexts, such as airstrikes from attack helicopters, fighter jets and Unmanned Air Vehicles/Systems (UAV/S) or drones, anti-tank missiles, shoulder-fired missiles, and live ammunition, all of which increased risk of death or injury, along with practices of home incursion, property destruction, and mass arrests. **Adolescent boys are particularly vulnerable as they are often treated as adults by IF** and are more likely to be present in confrontations, and subsequently subjected to death, injury or assault, and targeted with practices such as human shielding.<sup>16</sup> Militarized raids are the primary context in which adolescent boys are arbitrarily arrested or detained, with the number of adolescent boys held in administrative detention with limited legal safeguards and accompanying risk of torture and ill treatment rising rapidly during the period.<sup>17</sup> Raids conducted at night or in densely populated areas also generate intense fear, panic, and psychological trauma, especially for children who witness violence, see family members arrested, or experience forced entry into their homes.

Operations have triggered forced displacement, as seen in areas like Jenin, Tulkarem and Nur Shams Camps, where the majority of residents were uprooted. Displacement, along with the destruction of critical infrastructure including roads, electricity, water networks, and service points, reduces access to education, healthcare, protection, and other essential services, while also disrupting supportive social networks that many men and boys relied on prior to displacement.

Operations also trigger economic deprivation, particularly when breadwinners are arrested, injured, or restricted from movement, while damage to property, land seizure, and curfews disrupt livelihoods, leaving families without income or stability and deepening socioeconomic vulnerability. Men and boys with disabilities are significantly affected, facing heightened isolation, mobility barriers, and increased risk of violence, exploitation, neglect and psychosocial distress.



Palestinian man pulls his bike along a damaged street during an Israeli militarized operation in Jenin, September 2024 © Alaa Badarneh

## SETTLER VIOLENCE

In its Advisory Opinion issued 19 July 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) concluded that Israeli settlement policies, including the maintenance and expansion of settlements, amount to de facto annexation of large parts of the OPT in violation of Palestinians' right to self-determination, and that the continuing presence of Israel in the OPT is unlawful. Despite this, since October 2023, settler presence has accelerated across the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem; Peace Now documented 503,732 Israeli settlers and 141 settlements in the West Bank as of the end of 2024, and 271 outpost as of May 2025<sup>18</sup>, indicating an unprecedented expansion in settler presence compared to previous years. In tandem with expanded presence of settlers, settler violence – often with the presence, acquiescence, or support of IF – has risen rapidly across the West Bank. The number of settler attacks on Palestinians and their property rose substantially after October 2023, with recorded incidents for 2024 and 2025 far higher than pre-October 2023 baselines: in the two years prior to October 2023, 1,715 settler attacks were recorded, compared to 3,103 attacks in the two years following October 2023.<sup>19</sup> In addition to the number of attacks, the severity of attacks, including physical assaults, arson, vandalism of olive trees and agricultural assets, livestock theft and forced displacement, has also risen, including increasing incidents that resulted in casualties. Since 7 October 2023, and up until 31 December 2025, IF and settlers have killed at least 1,046 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Among the victims were 228 children, 221 of which were boys (21 per cent), while 798 were men (76 per cent).<sup>20</sup>

Settler violence is a major threat and escalating driver of protection risks, exposing men and boys, particularly farmers, shepherds, students, and rural residents, to **direct physical harm, intimidation, and harassment**. Boys, especially adolescents, are often first to encounter settlers during livelihood activities like herding or when traveling to school, which are frequent flashpoints for attacks. During attacks, men often stay behind to protect their property, putting them at heightened risk of physical harm.<sup>21</sup> Men and boys attempting to defend land, homes, or livestock face beatings, shootings, or arrest, significantly heightening risks of injury or death. Men from Bedouin or herding communities and those whose livelihoods depend on pastoralism or agriculture are at heightened exposure and have reported direct targeting because of their dependence on the land.<sup>22</sup> Approximately 3,200 Palestinians from dozens of Bedouin and herding communities have been forcibly displaced by settler violence since 7 October 2023, mostly from Area C.<sup>23</sup> In some cases, men and boys are subjected to **gendered humiliation or sexual and other gender-based (GBV) violence by settlers**, including degrading language and harassment.

Adolescent boys in particular are at risk in the context of settler violence and exposed to elevated risks of killing, injury, and long-term physical and mental harm. In January 2024, a 17-year-old boy was shot in the head and killed by armed settlers and IF soldiers shooting together on a road near in Al Mazra'a Al Sharqiya, Ramallah.<sup>24</sup> Later in April, another 17-year-old boy was shot in the head and killed by settlers during an attack by mob of settlers in Beitin village, Ramallah.<sup>25</sup> The cases point to specific risks echoed by community reports to adolescent boys when performing public gendered roles, including guarding or accessing land and homes, accompanying adults to land or roads seen as dangerous, and increased presence at the front of crowds or confrontations.

This violence causes **severe psychological distress**, especially among boys who experience or witness repeated attacks, leading to chronic fear and anxiety. Between October 2023 and May 2025, boys aged 7–12 were noted as being particularly affected by rising anxiety, PTSD, depression and withdrawal due in part to settler violence as well as broader violence from the occupation.<sup>26</sup>

While Israel as the occupying Power in the West Bank is bound to protect persons residing in the territory under its control, Israel has consistently failed to prevent or punish attacks by settlers<sup>27</sup>, exposing Palestinians to risk of harm without means of protection or recourse. Community members report that the continued lack of accountability for the incidents of violence creates a pervasive sense of powerlessness, particularly among men. Overall, settler violence generates a climate of fear and instability that directly and indirectly increases physical, psychological, and socioeconomic vulnerabilities for men, boys, and their communities.

## ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION

Since October 2023, Israel has **significantly tightened and expanded the use of the permit regime** for work across the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem, shifting it even more clearly from a system of control over labour mobility to a tool of widespread economic exclusion, with Palestinian men and youth engaged in work disproportionately affected due to their concentration in permit-dependent sectors. The resulting loss of livelihoods has contributed to a broader socioeconomic crisis and expanded protection risks and psychosocial harm, while reinforcing structural discrimination across the West Bank.

In the days immediately following 7 October 2023, Israel suspended previously issued work permits for upwards to 390,000 Palestinians<sup>28</sup>, resulting in hundreds of thousands of workers, primarily working age males 18 – 60, losing their income with no viable alternatives available in the West Bank economy. As a result, households dependent on permit-based livelihoods experienced **sharp drops in income, and a rise in food insecurity, and debt**. In conjunction with expanded movement restrictions and state and settler violence that has destroyed farmland and assets<sup>29</sup>, the restrictions on permits has undermined livelihoods across the West Bank and resulted in rapid economic decline; as of July 2025, 64 per cent of families have lost income due to revoked permits, reduced wages, or shuttered businesses, and 74 per cent now earn below the Minimum Expenditure Basket, compared to just 21 per cent in 2023.<sup>30</sup> In December 2025, 74 per cent of households reported reduced income by a male breadwinner, and financial restrictions were reported as the leading barrier (83 per cent) in male-headed households to meeting their basic needs. Access to livelihoods was reported by families as the leading for boys.<sup>31</sup>

With livelihoods disrupted, families struggle to meet basic needs such as food, housing, education, and healthcare, leading to reliance on **negative coping strategies**. As family incomes collapse, adolescent boys face pressure to contribute economically, resulting in **school dropout** and **early entry into informal and often hazardous labour**.<sup>32</sup> Between 2023 and 2025, the percentage of families sending at least one child to work rose from 1.5 to 7 per cent,<sup>33</sup> and Child Protection Area of Responsibility case trend analysis for Quarter 2 of 2025 shows that boys (53 of the 57 cases reported) are disproportionately at risk of child labour.

Some individuals and families report resorting to temporary **displacement** to escape violence, which offers short-term safety but disrupts livelihoods, education, and community ties, and increases risk of financial exploitation, debt accumulation, and re-displacement for affected families.<sup>34</sup> Growing economic constraints has also increased pressures towards external migration as a coping mechanism, particularly among male youth, with the widespread displacement from areas affected by militarized operations in the northern West Bank reinforcing this trend.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, for men and boys with disabilities, unemployment has deepened dependency, eroded autonomy, and increased susceptibility to neglect and exploitation.

“

*I have become weak, my wife and children have not met their needs, and I have a sense of hopelessness.”*

FGD participant from Tulkarm, October 2025

**Child and forced marriage** as a negative coping strategy to economic deprivation is increasing in the West Bank.<sup>36</sup> While primarily impacting negatively on girls, child marriage and forced marriage indirectly increase pressure on boys, who may be forced to assume adult economic responsibilities prematurely as child heads of household. Child marriage contributes to intergenerational cycles of poverty, school dropout, domestic violence, and psychosocial stress, dynamics which destabilize the family environment, increasing risks for male siblings and young men as well.

Conversely, economic deprivation across the West Bank is influencing marriage patterns more broadly, including delays in marriage among young men due to income loss and unemployment; in 2024, registered marriage contracts declined by 11 per cent in the first half of 2024 compared to the same period in 2023<sup>37</sup>, reflecting the impact of worsening economic conditions. Bedouin communities have also reported families are increasingly delaying marriage as a result of economic deprivation and reducing household incomes along with settler violence and demolitions, changing the broader socio-cultural framework of Bedouin communities and negatively impacting on sons and families.

Although not widespread, community members report **recruitment** into armed roles as a trend and significant concern in areas such as Tulkarm, particularly for displaced young men aged 18 to 25 facing economic desperation, including those who lost their work permit.<sup>38</sup> Boys aged 14 to 18 are also affected. The recruitment into such roles results in gross human rights violations of men and boys, including their right to life, and risk of harm through exposing youth to additional violence by IF or retaliation, deepening protection vulnerabilities.<sup>39</sup> Although there is currently no quantitative data available, observations from the field<sup>40</sup> indicate that the presence of armed Palestinians in and around refugee camps, especially in the northern West Bank, has a significant influence on teenage boys in particular. Adolescent boys have been exposed to weaponry, armed activity, and violent clashes, all of which can normalize violence and shape their perception of their future. Reported recruitment of boys and young men by armed Palestinians has increased since 2021, driven in part by the enduring Israeli occupation, expanding Israeli settlements, and state and settler violence; peer pressure; reduced livelihood opportunities and growing economic insecurity; and anger over the war in Gaza. There are further concerns regarding the potential forced nature of such recruitment, given societal and community pressures on men and boys to perform certain roles, the lack of alternative roles in the economy, and the heightened vulnerability of children who lack the capacity to make free and informed choices.

Additionally, Israeli children reportedly including from disadvantaged backgrounds<sup>41</sup>, have been increasingly recruited and used with the knowledge and support of the Israeli government to advance settlement expansion and forcible transfer of Palestinians in the West Bank, both war crimes under the IV Geneva Convention. In the reporting period, children and teenagers have been at the forefront of intensified efforts to establish new outposts from where they have carried out daily attacks against nearby Palestinian communities to force them to leave the land, involving daily acts of beating, stealing or killing their livestock, cutting water pipes and electricity cables serving the communities, entering and terrorizing the communities on foot or in all-terrain vehicles.<sup>42</sup> The use of these children to commit crimes against Palestinians has exposed them to violence and, in rare cases, also to detention by IF.

Community members report that economic stress functions as a risk multiplier, fueling **household tension, domestic violence, and psychosocial distress**, reinforcing cycles of poverty and risk while reducing individuals' ability to maintain dignity, safety, and resilience.<sup>43</sup> The Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility has highlighted a clear increase in Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in the period since October 2023, and UNRWA's Relief and Social Services Programme reports that both women and men are now coming forward as survivors of IPV and intra-familial violence. This indicates not only a rise in IPV, but also a growing recognition that men and boys can themselves be victims of emotional, physical and sometimes economic abuse within the family. However, disclosure by male survivors remains limited due to stigma and prevailing gender norms, and available services are still more tailored to women and girls, leaving significant unmet protection and psychosocial needs among men and boys.

# PROTECTION RISKS

In the West Bank including East Jerusalem, men and boys continue to face a concentrated and escalating set of severe protection risks driven by intensifying militarized operations, widespread movement restrictions, and worsening socio-economic conditions. For **men**, the risks are rooted in a consistent pattern of targeting and profiling: arbitrary arrest and detention emerges as the most severe and frequently cited concern, often accompanied by torture and ill-treatment including conflict-related sexual violence, excessive use of force during raids and amplified by unlawful impediments and restrictions on freedom of movement. These dynamics are reinforced through psychological distress linked to the cumulative effects of occupation violence, fear, and an increasing inability to fulfil expected provider roles amid rising unemployment and economic collapse.

For **boys**, the risk environment is similarly shaped by direct exposure to violence, but with a distinct age-specific profile. Boys, particularly adolescents, are disproportionately subject to unnecessary or excessive use of force, arbitrary arrest and detention, and unlawful impediments and restrictions to freedom of movement, mirroring the treatment of adult males but with heightened long-term consequences. Frequent nighttime incursions and raids, and boys' proximity to clashes create persistent fear, sleep disruption, and stress. Psychological distress is one of the most consistent risks reported for boys, both directly inflicted by IF and indirectly through socialization that suppresses help-seeking behavior and access to services. A key child-specific risk is the denial of access to education, driven by movement restrictions, settler violence along school routes, military presence near schools, and displacement. This not only interrupts learning but also increases exposure to hazardous environments as boys spend more time outside protective routines, while also reducing access to positive coping strategies and skills development.<sup>44</sup>

Both age groups also face risks related to forced displacement, family separation and exposure to explosive ordnance, particularly in areas affected by militarized operations and for men and boys from Bedouin and herding communities shepherding adjacent to firing zones in Area C.

Available data underscores a protection environment in which male identity intersects with occupation violence, economic hardship, and social expectations, driving heightened exposure to violence and both physical and psychosocial harm. These risks have cumulative, cross-generational effects: adult men face increasing barriers to fulfilling household roles, while boys experience long-term developmental impacts from early and repeated exposure to trauma. Addressing these patterns requires comprehensive protection including case management, legal aid, and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services, and integrated livelihood interventions, alongside sustained advocacy on the use of force, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, and safe access to employment and services.

In this context, men and boys draw on a mix of **positive and negative coping strategies**, however communities report increasing reliance on negative strategies, reflecting the erosion of protective mechanisms under prolonged pressure. Positive coping is strongly rooted in **community solidarity**: men and boys rely on extended family, neighbours, and informal community networks for emotional and material support, including sharing information on safe routes, military movements, and legal rights. Volunteerism, participation in community protection groups, escorting children to school, and engagement in neighbourhood committees or early warning systems help restore a sense of agency and collective safety. Many also turn to **religious, cultural, educational, and recreational activities** including sports, arts, life skills, vocational training, and online work opportunities to manage stress and maintain purpose. Boys in particular benefit from structured activities offered by NGOs or community centres, which can temporarily restore routines disrupted by violence and closures.

**Displaced men and boys** report that community support sources they relied on prior to their displacement have been interrupted and are no longer available in displacement, and a growing number of men and boys are managing their stress in isolation, putting them at greater risk of psychosocial distress.<sup>45</sup> In the absence of community support structures, adequate livelihoods and psychosocial support, negative coping mechanisms are becoming more frequent and severe. Exposure to child labour and child marriage is rising. Men and boys report internalizing distress through silence, emotional suppression, or social withdrawal, often due to stigma around vulnerability and masculine norms discouraging help-seeking, while there is limited tailoring to the specific needs of men and boys within MHPSS services. Others report externalizing stress through aggression, reciprocal violence, and anger, sometimes within the household or between families, and sometimes in confrontations with settlers or soldiers that increases their exposure to arrest or injury.

## RISK 1

### Arbitrary or unlawful arrest and/or detention

Palestinian men and boys face extreme risk of arbitrary or unlawful arrest and detention in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, often accompanied by torture and other inhumane treatment, and GBV including sexual assault.<sup>46</sup> In the days following 7 October 2023, IF carried out a wave of mass arrests including more than 10,000 workers – primarily men – and patients accessing medical treatment in the West Bank. Since October 2023, UNRWA has recorded more than 22,300 detentions of Palestinians by IF, the majority of whom are men and boys.<sup>47</sup> According to the latest disaggregated figures published by Israeli Prison Service (IPS), at the end of September 2025, the IPS held 10,914 Palestinian detainees qualified as “security detainees” including 2,674 persons (2,665 men, 2 women, 7 boys and excluding detainees held by the Israeli military) held under the Unlawful Combatants Law, 3,227 persons (3,050 men, 28 women, 148 boys, 1 girl) in remand before conviction, 3,521 persons (3,344 men, 9 women, 168 boys) in administrative detention with limited legal safeguards<sup>48</sup>, and 1,492 persons (1,458 men, 8 women, and 26 boys) after conviction. The total detained including the number of children in administrative detention in 2025 - all boys and the highest number recorded since DCIP began monitoring in 2008<sup>49</sup> - surpassed records set in both 2024 and 2023, indicating expanding use of arrest and detention across the West Bank. Of note, since 7 October 2023, Israel suspended access of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and independent monitors to all Palestinian detainees, further limiting protections for those in custody.

The PSF has also carried out arbitrary arrests and detention, including several cases of arrest of persons based on the exercise of their freedom of expression and for their perceived political affiliation, including journalists and children, and the unlawful arrest of unarmed persons holding ties with armed Palestinians, practices which grew in the context of the PSF operation in Jenin camp.<sup>50</sup>

Figures include persons detained from both Gaza and the West Bank and brought to IPS detention centers in the West Bank. While the majority of Palestinians detained under the Unlawful Combatants Law were from Gaza (2,632 from Gaza and 5 from the West Bank), the majority of persons in administrative detention were from the West Bank including East Jerusalem (3,472 from the West Bank and 2 from Gaza). Of the total detained, men constitute over 96 percent, boys make up roughly 3 per cent, while women and girls represent less than 1 per cent, reflecting **the systematic targeting of adult men but also adolescent boys through arbitrary arrest and detention**.

In 2024, the UN Secretary General's Report on Children and Armed Conflict verified the detention – including ongoing cases of enforced disappearance and administrative detention without charge or trial – of 951 Palestinian children, of whom 940 (roughly 99 per cent) were boys.<sup>51</sup> 861 of these detentions took place in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, where boys are routinely exposed to arrest during military operations, night raids and street encounters. In another study, the majority of arrests of boys (65 per cent) occurred at night between midnight and dawn, and approximately 93 per cent were blindfolded and handcuffed.<sup>52</sup> During arrest and detention, 42 per cent suffered injuries including gunshot wounds, broken bones, shoulder dislocation and suffocation.<sup>53</sup> Figures provided by the Israeli Office of the Legal Advisor to a Freedom of Information (FOI) request by Hamoked in July 2025 reports a total of 96 child detainees who had experienced up to six months of administrative detention; 53 who had experienced up to a year; and 11 who had experienced up to two years in administrative detention, with the overwhelming majority being boys. Children requiring legal assistance, including child detainees, was the highest child protection concern reported in the Child Protection Area of Responsibility's Q2 case trend analysis, making up 20 per cent of child protection caseloads. Of these, 96 per cent were boys, primarily aged 13–17, who required legal support through case management services. These patterns illustrate a **continued environment where men and boys experience significant fear, coercion and loss of liberty, coupled with reports of physical violence, intimidation and lack of access to family or legal support**.

Community members report that young men and **adolescent boy residents of refugee camps** are at heightened risk of arbitrary arrest and detention<sup>54</sup>, and as a result have a pervasive sense of fear that discourages them from moving freely, seeking work, or engaging in community activities. Exposure to arbitrary arrest and detention intersects with economic deprivation and is also heightened for men experiencing loss of permits for working inside the Green Line, with community members reporting increasing cases of killings and injuries, in addition to the arrest and beating of men who have previously had their permits revoked when attempting to access work.<sup>55</sup>

For former detainees, and especially youth, the psychological toll is profound. Reports describe anxiety, depression, nightmares and/or insomnia, hyperactivity, and developmental or educational difficulties lasting months or years after release. Q2 case trend analysis by the Child Protection Area of Responsibility notes the high level of stigma faced by boys released from detention which isolates them from their communities. This increases the likelihood of school drop-out, pushing boys further away from protective environments and elevates risks of child labour or engagement in confrontations, creating a cycle of vulnerability that extends well beyond the initial detention and ill treatment. Some former youth detainees also report experiences of abuse, including sexual violence and prolonged isolation, which further undermine healthy coping without access to tailored support. While some post-detention boys are referred to ex-detainee reintegration, MHPSS, or case management, those who fall outside these referral pathways are at **exceptionally high risk of negative coping, re-victimization, or re-arrest**. Protection partners report that boys with disabilities and boys living in areas with high access constraints affected by arrest and detention face additional barriers to accessing services due to mobility challenges, lack of tailored programmes, and logistical constraints.

## RISK 2

### Excessive use of force

Since 7 October 2023, and up until 31 December 2025, IF and settlers have killed at least 1,046 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem.<sup>56</sup> Of the total, 798 (76 per cent) were men and 221 (21 per cent) were boys. 37 Israeli men and 4 boys were documented killed during the same period. Documentation by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) attributes this staggering number of killings of Palestinians to the IF's systematic use of lethal force against Palestinians in the vast majority of cases, including live fire, airstrikes, and shoulder-fired missiles, in an unnecessary or disproportionate - and therefore unlawful - manner, with evident disregard for Palestinians' right to life, including children.<sup>57</sup> Despite the absence of hostilities in the occupied West Bank, between 7 October 2023 and 31 December 2025, IF launched 109 airstrikes and used other weapons designated for warfare to mainly target refugee camps in Jenin, Tulkarem, Tubas, and Nablus<sup>58</sup> resulting in the death of 449 Palestinians, including 261 by airstrikes and 47 by shoulder-fired projectiles.<sup>59</sup> Of those killed, 365 were men (82 per cent) and 70 were boys (16 per cent).

Boys make up 97 per cent of all child fatalities by IF recorded by OCHA from 7 October 2023 to 31 December 2025 and account for 21 per cent of all the 1,046 recorded fatalities. Jenin, Jenin camp, Nur Shams camp and Tulkarm camp are the most affected areas respectively. The UN Secretary General's Report on Children and Armed Conflict verified the killing of 97 Palestinian children – of which 92 cases (95 per cent) were boys – in the West Bank including East Jerusalem during 2024 alone.<sup>60</sup> These verified cases primarily involved live ammunition (70 deaths) and airstrikes (20 deaths). 1,561 Palestinian children (1,131 boys, 430 girls) were maimed. The maiming was largely attributed to IF (1,507) and Israeli settlers (35) as a result of the use of live ammunition (313), teargas inhalation (168), rubber-coated metal bullets (20) and air strikes (10). Since 7 October 2023 and as of 31 December 2025, of the 221 boys have been killed and 1,699 injured, roughly 80 per cent of deaths were due to live ammunition and 20 per cent due to airstrikes.<sup>61</sup>

Community members report that adolescent boys and young men aged 14 to 25 years are the most vulnerable to violence during operations or attacks on homes, and also pointed to increasing risk for frontline responders including Red Crescent volunteers and paramedics.<sup>62</sup> Men and boys from Bedouin herder communities and rural areas face disproportionate risks of violence.<sup>63</sup> The extensive use of excessive force, including lethal force, against men and boys in the West Bank including in cases where there is no imminent threat raises concerns about violations under international human rights law and men and boys' right to life. The extremely high rate at which men and boys, and adolescent boys in particular, are killed and injured raises serious concerns over their **systematic unlawful and discriminatory targeting as a group, indicating a process of gendered securitization by the IF whereby male identity is construed to justify resort to force, including lethal force, in gross violation of international human rights law.**<sup>64</sup>



Israeli forces use force to search an adolescent as he tries to reach his home in Tulkarm refugee camp during a militarized operation, July 2025 © Alaa Badarneh

The UN Secretary-General's Report on Children and Armed Conflict verified 3,688 grave violations against children in the West Bank including East Jerusalem in 2024 alone.<sup>65</sup> Children affected by grave violations, including injuries from unlawful use of force, face heightened barriers to accessing services, as many fear arrest or interrogation if they seek medical or psychosocial support. This results in serious under-reporting of needs and delayed treatment, further compounding trauma and physical harm.

### Explosive Ordnance (EO) risks to men and boys

Palestinian men and boys are among those more affected by EO, including landmines, unexploded ordnance (UXO) and improvised explosive devices (IED), resulting in fatalities and injuries. While men experience EO risks primarily in the context of work or movement, boys are more likely to encounter EO through play or mobility in contaminated open areas.

There are 46 identified contaminated areas in the West Bank, predominantly previous military firing ranges and legacy minefields.<sup>66</sup> Although the exact extent of antipersonnel (AP) mine contamination is not known, all identified mined areas are located in territory under Israeli control. In the Article 7 transparency report for 2023, the Palestine Mine Action Centre (PMAC) confirmed the presence of 16 areas containing AP mines, covering a total of 604,634 m<sup>2</sup>, while a further 65 areas along the border with Jordan, covering approximately 18,510,899 m<sup>2</sup>, remain suspected to contain AP mines.<sup>67</sup>

According to data shared by PMAC and the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) police, during 2024 and 2025, a total of 126 victims of EO incidents were recorded, resulting in both fatalities and injuries. Of this total, 122 (approximately 97 per cent) were men and boys. Men and boys represent the majority of persons injured by EO, consistent with the wider pattern of maiming as a result of exposure to EO. EO contamination restricts boys' freedom of movement, limits access to safe recreation spaces and contributes to increased fear, stress and long-term psychosocial harm.

## RISK 3

### Torture or cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment

While the use of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment by Israel<sup>68</sup>, especially in detention, was of serious concern prior to 7 October 2023; the period since has seen a significant expansion of risk.<sup>69</sup> **Israeli authorities have deliberately imposed conditions of detention that amount to torture or other forms of ill-treatment and that have contributed to the deaths of detainees**, while the culture of impunity and the denial of ICRC and independent monitors access have fostered extreme violence against Palestinians in Israeli jails.<sup>70</sup> OHCHR has documented the systematic torture and ill-treatment of Palestinian prisoners, including repeated beatings, waterboarding, stress positions, the use of rape and other sexual and gender-based violence, and the imposition of deliberately inhumane conditions such as starvation and the denial of clean clothes, hygiene necessities and medical care, in many cases resulting in the death of detainees.<sup>71,72,73,74,75</sup> While torture and mistreatment affect all groups detained or in the power of Israeli authorities, the high percentage of male detainees, including boys, puts them at heightened risk. Torture and ill-treatment has also reportedly been carried out by the PSF in relation to arbitrary arrest and detention of Palestinians, particularly during PSF operations in Jenin, and included practices of beatings, solitary confinement for months at a time, stress positions, and denial of medical care.<sup>76</sup>

Between 7 October 2023 and 19 December 2025, at least 85 Palestinians, all males including 84 men and one 17-year-old boy, have died in detention in the West Bank (49 from Gaza, 24 from the West Bank, and 2 Palestinian citizens of Israel), highlighting the particular vulnerability of men and boys to torture or other forms of ill-treatment in detention.<sup>77</sup> Israeli authorities have released information indicating the death of another 19 detainees, without sufficient details to enable the verification of their identity.<sup>78</sup> In at least 12 cases, OHCHR gathered testimonies or evidence in the form of autopsy reports that detainees died after being beaten or tortured by Israeli security forces. An additional 22 detainees with health conditions requiring medical treatment died due to harsh detention conditions and denial of medical treatment.<sup>79</sup>

The UN Secretary General's Report on Children and Armed Conflict highlights **widespread patterns of abuse against detained children**, the majority of which are boys, including beatings, prolonged blindfolding, food and sleep deprivation, exposure to extreme cold, and denial of medical care.<sup>80</sup> Conditions have worsened since October 2023, with boys held in either solitary confinement or overcrowded cells, at times with adults, and facing restricted access to lawyers and families.<sup>81,82</sup> Further harm is illustrated by the death of a 17-year-old boy in early 2025 due to starvation, dehydration and denial of medical intervention.<sup>83</sup> Together, these trends point to an escalating protection environment in which boys face acute risk of torture and ill treatment.

## Sexual violence against men and boys

The Secretary-General's 2025 annual report on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV)<sup>84</sup> documents sexual and other forms of gender-based violence (GBV) used by armed actors in the OPT in 2024.<sup>85</sup> Sexual violence was documented in multiple cases across the West Bank including East Jerusalem perpetrated by Israeli armed and security forces, including the Israeli Defense Forces, the Israeli Prison Service including the "Nachshon" Unit and Keter special forces, the Israel Security Agency and the Police Counter Terrorism Unit.<sup>86</sup> The use of sexual violence in detention was observed across multiple facilities including temporary holding sites and during interrogations while in transit.<sup>87</sup> Additional cases took place at checkpoints and during house raids by settlers. In 12 documented cases covered in the report, 7 cases were against Palestinian men. While the report does not specify which acts were used against boys, these verified patterns affecting primarily male detainees raise significant concern for boys held in similar conditions. Violations include rape, attempted rape, harm including burns and beatings to genitals, forced public nudity and strip searches conducted in an abusive and degrading manner. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the OPT, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, reporting on the use of sexual, reproductive and gender-based violence, concluded that such acts constitute torture and amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.<sup>88</sup>

Sexual violence has increased in severity and frequency since 7 October 2023, and is considered a **practice and policy** by authorities intended to intimidate, humiliate and degrade Palestinian men.<sup>89</sup> The systematic and increasingly widespread use of the practice as a punitive measure is further considered a form of **collective punishment**.<sup>90</sup> The use of **technology-facilitated GBV** by IF and settlers, including the filming and documentation of acts of sexual violence against Palestinian men, and the subsequent dissemination in their communities, triggers shame and isolation, and was identified by the Commission as a means to not only humiliate survivors, but as a **practice designed to induce displacement** from their homes and communities.<sup>91</sup>

Palestinian men and boys have reported being coerced to assist IF during operations in manners that may constitute **the use of human shields** — a violation under international law — including, for example, men and boys being forced to check buildings for inhabitants or EO or being forced to walk in front of IF personnel during operations. In one case documented by UNRWA, two injured Palestinian men were forced to hang onto the bonnet of an IF vehicle and driven through Jenin Camp and threatened with death if they did not comply. In 2024, the UN verified the use of 5 Palestinian boys as human shields by IF in the West Bank.<sup>92</sup>

Men and boys exposed to torture and ill treatment have pointed to the significant and long-term impact of such experiences on their person and on the wider family unit, describing an eroded sense of security and extreme psychological harm.<sup>93</sup> Some boys and survivors of ill treatment released from detention also reported that their identity documents were not returned, leaving them unable to move through checkpoints or access services. For boys living in areas such as Shuafat Camp or parts of Hebron where movement depends on crossing checkpoints, this creates major barriers to reintegration, schooling and access to services.

## RISK 4

### Unlawful impediments and restrictions on freedom of movement

Unlawful impediments and restrictions to freedom of movement in the West Bank including East Jerusalem **function as a compounding risk, directly limiting Palestinians' right to freedom of movement while intensifying the impact of militarized operations and settler violence, and amplifying exposure to violence and deprivation.**

In the days immediately following 7 October 2023, Israel imposed additional movement restrictions, particularly affecting East Jerusalem, the H2 area of Hebron and areas close to settlements and around the Seam Zone. IF, with settlers, have closed pre-existing checkpoints, established new checkpoints at the entrance to villages, and installed new roadblocks with cement blocks, dirt mounds, iron gates and dykes to block entrance to entire villages.<sup>94</sup> As of December 2025, **over 800 physical obstacles including checkpoints, roadblocks, gates, and road closures – along with the 712km barrier wall – permanently or intermittently restrict freedom of movement** across the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem.<sup>95</sup>

Men and adolescent boys often bear the responsibility of travelling for income, education, or essential household needs, making them the most exposed to checkpoints and accompanying delays, denials of passage, or confrontations.<sup>96</sup> Checkpoints become flashpoints for clashes, where young men and adolescent boys are disproportionately present and consequently at greater risk of physical harm and abuse including invasive searches, physical and verbal harassment, humiliation, arbitrary arrest and detention, and excessive and sometimes lethal use of force.<sup>97</sup> Unpredictable restrictions and closures further contribute to job loss, economic strain, and increased poverty, undermining men's role as primary providers and intensifying household stress, while also increasing exposure to violence.

As exposure to violence and injury have expanded in the context of growing militarized operations and settler violence, specialized treatment for illness and injuries sustained is frequently blocked by Israeli authorities through movement restrictions. In 2024, 2,823 permit applications, including for 1,600 boys, to Israeli authorities for children from the West Bank to gain access to specialized medical treatment outside of the West Bank were denied or not approved in time to reach emergency services, directly affecting access to lifesaving medical care and psychosocial support. The cumulative impact of these restrictions generates profound psychological distress in men and boys, including chronic stress, anger, fear, and a persistent sense of being targeted.<sup>98</sup> Communities become increasingly isolated, with weakened social cohesion and reduced access for specialized service providers. Partners report that over time, the restrictions on freedom of movement and curtailed access to opportunities for men have contributed to negative coping mechanisms such as child labour, child marriage, and domestic violence, with significant secondary impact on women, girls, and wider communities.

In response to the high rates at which adolescents and boys are exposed to violence by settlers or through militarized operations, families in Area C reported restricting boys' movements in open areas as a coping strategy, further negatively impacting on their wellbeing and freedom of movement.<sup>99</sup> While movement restrictions in the West Bank drive heightened exposure to violence for men and boys, FGD participants consistently emphasized that women and girls' movement remains most restricted and limits their access to critical services, indicating strong gendered implications informing risk exposure and movement restriction in the West Bank.



**RISK 5****Psychological/emotional abuse or inflicted distress**

Men and boys in the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem experience psychological and emotional abuse or inflicted distress directly by IF through multiple abusive practices and recurrent violence. Across the West Bank, partners and community members underscore **tactics and measures against men and boys that humiliate, indicating a wider trend in dignity-related harm**:

“

*The army has no mercy on anyone and deliberately insults us and humiliates us and violates our dignity and the dignity of our families.”*

FGD participant from Nablus, October 2025

Psychological/emotional abuse and inflicted distress primarily take place through the recurrent violence and threat of violence rooted in the occupation, preventing normalcy and feelings of safety. It often takes place in the context of arrest and detention, with widespread abuse of Palestinian men and boys in the prison network documented by OHCHR, Save the Children<sup>100</sup>, Defence for Children International<sup>101</sup>, YMCA, War Child<sup>102</sup> and the Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs (CDA).<sup>103</sup> They share accounts of men and boys forced to watch or hear the abuse of other detainees, and subjected to solitary confinement, blindfolding, insults, threats of harm including sexual and other forms of GBV, and threats of death.

Psychological/emotional abuse and inflicted distress also take place during raids and arrest, with survivor testimonies describing physical and verbal abuse of men and adolescent boys, often in front of their families, intended to humiliate. Community members provided accounts of taunting by soldiers during cases of arrest, with soldiers exploiting gender norms to degrade men.

“

*If you are a man, come after us”*

FGD participant from H2 Hebron quoting the soldier as he arrested his son

Around one third of caregivers report not knowing what to do if they or their children are arrested, intensifying psychological distress during these incidents<sup>104</sup>, while access to MHPSS services, especially for men and boys, remains limited.<sup>105</sup>

Men and boys also experience psychological/emotional distress indirectly through the combined experience of the violence of the occupation with socialization that suppresses help-seeking behaviour and access to services. In the West Bank including East Jerusalem, social norms on gender and masculinity are shaped by the prolonged occupation, and men and boys are often socially perceived as the primary protectors and providers for their families, with masculinity closely tied to fulfillment of these roles both within the household and wider community.<sup>106</sup> Militarized operations, home demolitions, arrests and incursions challenge men’s ability to protect their families and communities<sup>107</sup>, and the loss of employment, income, and livelihoods further exacerbates distress by undermining men’s traditional role in the West Bank as breadwinners and providers.<sup>108</sup> This is contributing to mental health issues among men including anxiety, isolation, depression and shame<sup>109</sup>, with growing numbers displaying signs of acute psychological distress and trauma symptoms such as panic attacks and nightmares.<sup>110</sup> Boys, observing this breakdown of masculine protection roles, may internalize harmful gender norms such as an emphasis on aggression, honor, control, or risk-taking, or conversely may suffer from a sense of inadequacy and shame if they cannot meet these norms.<sup>111</sup>

Socialization to suppress emotions and view vulnerability as weakness generates stigma related to help-seeking behaviour. Combined with cultural taboos and the prioritization of visible conflict-related harm, stigma leads to underreporting and limited recognition of issues such as mental health or sexual violence against men and boys. For sexual violence specifically and despite progress in expanding outreach and access to care, norms of masculinity and fear of stigma continue to silence men and boys from disclosing or accessing services, increasing risk of self-harm.<sup>112</sup> These dynamics are especially acute in **hard-to-reach areas, rural communities, refugee settings, and among men and boys with disabilities**, who face compounded barriers to services.

Focus group discussions conducted in Tulkarm governorate among men and boys displaced from Nur Shams and Tulkarm camps highlighted that the psychosocial and economic stress along with separation from family and community created by the conditions of occupation and displacement reinforce feelings of isolation and loneliness. Participants also acknowledged that the situation has increased tensions and violence within the home and between families, particularly for families living in crowded shelters in IDP sites that limit privacy<sup>113</sup>, **increasing risks of domestic violence** for women and children, neglect of children by caregivers, and deteriorating community social cohesion.<sup>114</sup> According to the Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility West Bank Safety Audit, the occupation and its intensification since October 2023 has driven a **rise in Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)** within Palestinian households.<sup>115</sup> 61 per cent of heads of households surveys reported experiencing psychological distress. Of these, 71 per cent reported demonstrating these feelings through anger and aggressive behaviour, including domestic violence and neglect of children.<sup>116</sup>

Among children receiving child protection case management in the West Bank, neglect has emerged as the second most common child protection concern, highlighting **increasing complexity of risks for children**.<sup>117</sup> A total of 274 cases were documented in Q2 of 2025, up sharply from 170 in Q1, representing a 61 per cent increase in just three months. Neglect now accounts for 19 per cent of the total caseload in the West Bank. Boys accounted for 58 per cent of cases, while girls represented 42 per cent. Neglect is not only a symptom of family breakdown but also a driver of secondary risks. Children pushed out of protective family environments are more likely to engage in unsafe coping mechanisms, from hazardous work to association with risky peer groups. The age distribution shows that school-aged children 7–12 were the most affected, making up around 50 per cent of reported cases, followed by younger children under 6 years (30 per cent) and adolescents 13–17 years (20 per cent). The numbers suggest that while neglect is often associated with younger children, in the West Bank it is also a significant risk for older children and adolescents, who are frequently left unsupervised or without support when caregivers navigate the oppressive movement and administrative barriers imposed through the occupation to meet daily household needs.

Israeli forces stop and search a boy as he tries to reach his home in Tulkarm refugee camp during a militarized operation, July 2025 © Alaa Badarneh



# RESPONSE

## PROGRESS MADE ON PROTECTION

Since January 2025, organizations have expanded and diversified their efforts to meet the protection needs of men and boys across the West Bank including East Jerusalem, **strengthening MHPSS, case management, legal assistance, proactive protection, and community-based protection**. Outreach has grown through **mobile teams, satellite service points, community committees**, and the establishment of safe spaces, including tailored interventions for boys affected by grave violations, those injured in clashes who may avoid services due to fear of arrest, and post-detention boys who are at heightened risk of negative coping or re-arrest if not engaged in reintegration or MHPSS support. Innovative methods such as drama, puppetry, storytelling, life skills, children's groups, youth emergency committees, and Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE), have enhanced engagement, while several organizations advanced positive masculinity sessions targeting adolescent boys and strengthened partnerships with ministries and local institutions.

## ACCESS-RELATED CHALLENGES AND ACTIONS

Movement restrictions, checkpoints, settler violence, incursions, and escalating insecurity frequently limited safe access to communities, especially in **Area C, Bedouin areas, and remote rural locations**. These conditions also impeded men and boys' ability to reach services. Stigma around seeking psychosocial support, limited disability-inclusive infrastructure, and funding gaps further reduced participation. Children injured or exposed to excessive force often declined services due to heightened risks of arrest, and lack of tailored services for adult men with disabilities further constrained access.

In response, organizations adapted service delivery through flexible, community-based approaches. Mobile and remote modalities, alternative routes, and low-profile activities were used to maintain presence in high-risk areas; this included the development of remote case management guidelines and delivery of orientation workshops. Some organizations expanded field locations or hired staff from within targeted communities to overcome movement barriers. Strengthened coordination with humanitarian structures and grassroots groups helped ensure safer and more predictable access. Male caseworkers were assigned to sensitive cases, confidentiality and safety planning were reinforced, and community volunteers supported service continuity where staff movement was restricted. Policy dialogue and advocacy aimed to improve legal frameworks and institutional responsiveness, while community engagement ensured interventions remained culturally appropriate and inclusive. Collectively, these adaptations enabled organizations to sustain – and in some areas expand – protection support for men and boys despite an increasingly constrained operational environment.

## CRITICAL GAPS AND POPULATION REACHED

Across reporting organisations, men and boys constitute a **moderate share** of programme caseloads, most commonly between 26–50 per cent, with a substantial number of programmes serving only 11–25 per cent. Between January and November 2025, boys represented 46 per cent of children reached through group-based MHPSS activities, but only 34 per cent of children identified and referred to specialized child protection services.<sup>118</sup> This distribution suggests that while men and boys are reached by many services, they are disproportionately not accessing available support, **due to gender norms, stigma, movement restrictions, lack of tailored service modalities, or limited awareness of available assistance**. Only a small minority of programmes report very low male caseloads (<10 per cent), and none report over 75 per cent, indicating that **services are neither fully excluding nor fully capturing men and boys**, but that male access remains **uneven and constrained** across the response.

Partners consistently report **ongoing service gaps affecting men and boys**, particularly in MHPSS, livelihoods, legal protection, and access to safe spaces. Men and boys often lack tailored mental health and stress-management services, despite facing high exposure to violence, detention, movement restrictions, and livelihood pressures. Adolescent boys are frequently overlooked in child protection programming, even though they experience some of the highest levels of risk, including arrest, clashes, excessive use of force, settler attacks, and engagement in hazardous labour, while adult men, especially those recently detained or affected by violence, struggle to access counselling, legal aid, or reintegration support. While boys account for approximately 52 per cent of identified child protection cases, the highest concentration of cases is among young children (7–11 years), with a marked decline in service coverage among adolescents. This suggests that as boys enter later adolescence, they are less likely to be reached through sustained case management services, despite increasing exposure to protection risks.<sup>119</sup> This gap reflects structural and systematic constraints rather than partner capacity and is driven by limited availability of adolescent-focused interventions, stigma reflecting boys' access to services, and persistent safety and security constraints that limit both outreach and sustained engagement.

Service exclusion is most acute among **men and boys with disabilities**, those living in **hard-to-reach or movement-restricted areas**, and **Bedouin/herding and refugee communities**, all of whom face intersecting physical, structural, and social barriers. There remains a significant **gap in data and services for LGBTQI+ individuals** across the West Bank. Children with disabilities represent only 3 per cent of all children reached through Child Protection Area of Responsibility-reported activities, highlighting significant gaps in targeted identification and specialized support, particularly for boys with intersecting vulnerabilities. Older men, adolescent boys, and socioeconomically marginalized groups, such as urban poor or daily labourers experiencing permit and livelihood loss, also access services at far lower rates.

Protection partners not providing tailored services for men and boys reported **lack of gender training and expertise** as the main barrier. Stigma around help-seeking, heavy livelihood responsibilities, and humanitarian programming often geared toward women and children further reduce male engagement. Expanded bureaucratic impediments including the pending **registration of international NGOs** and resulting constriction in humanitarian space is expected to significantly reduce access to services for men and boys until principled access for NGOs is restored. Together, these gaps contribute to heightened protection risks, reduced coping capacity, and increasing psychosocial distress among men and boys across the West Bank while also underscoring significant protection funding gaps that limit the depth, continuity, and age, gender and diversity-responsive programming required to address their needs effectively.

Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)  
activities delivered by War Child Holland  
© War Child Holland



# RECOMMENDATIONS

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## RISK 1

### Arbitrary or unlawful arrest and/or detention

#### GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

- Immediately end administrative detention and other actions that amount to arbitrary arrest or detention. Release all Palestinians who have been arbitrarily detained and ensure due process and fair trial guarantees for persons in detention. Ensure the conditions and treatment of detainees meet basic minimum standards under international human rights law.
- Minimize all instances of detention of children. Bring practices in line with the Child Rights Convention and juvenile justice principles, which includes ensuring that any deprivation of liberty of a child is used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time. Any child subject to detention must have immediate access to legal assistance, expedient judicial proceedings, and alternatives to custodial detention should be sought at all stages. End and refrain from any administrative detention of children.

#### PROTECTION ACTORS

- Expand targeted MHPSS, case management, legal aid and reintegration support for men and boys arrested and/or detained during 2026 – including confidential outreach to those avoiding services due to fear of re-arrest or stigma.
- Strengthen post-detention reintegration support for children, including family-based case management, school re-enrolment support, and sustained psychosocial follow-up to mitigate long-term harm and risk of re-arrest. Strengthen systematic documentation, referral, and follow-up of child detention cases through CPIMS+ and established child protection referral pathways to support service delivery, advocacy, and accountability.
- Child protection actors develop a standardized ‘know your rights’ package for boys and caregivers delivered through social media channels, community awareness-raising sessions and community-based protection structures within Q2 of 2026.

## RISK 2

### Excessive use of force

#### GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL

- Immediately take all measures required to both prevent and respond to settler violence, prosecute perpetrators, and uphold public order without discrimination.
- Review, re-issue and enforce standard operating procedures for armed forces and police forces in the West Bank, and plan and control operations to ensure that any resort to force is always necessary and proportionate, in accordance with international human rights standards relevant to law enforcement, with an emphasis on de-escalation and community policing. Ensure that any potential lethal use of force is used only as a last resort to prevent an imminent threat to life, when no other means are available. Refrain from the use of tactics and weaponry developed for warfare.

#### HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

- Strengthen the agility and capacity of early warning and early action intersectoral humanitarian responses (e.g. proactive protection, preparedness and community self-protection networking) in 2026 to increase rapid pre-emptive interventions and reduce risk exposure in cases of emerging violence. Improve outreach to high-risk, remote, and settlement-adjacent areas, using mobile teams, community committees, and disability-inclusive approaches. Ensure that child-specific safeguards are embedded within early-warning, community-protection, and incident-response mechanisms, including age-disaggregated incident tracking, by Q2 of 2026.
- Expand victim assistance activities in 2026 to provide holistic support to individuals affected by EO, and integration of EORE and conflict preparedness and protection (CPP) initiatives within broader humanitarian programming to maximize protective impact, particularly in hard-to-reach areas affected by violence.
- Strengthen coordination between protection, health, and education actors in 2026 to ensure rapid identification and follow-up support for men and boys injured or psychologically affected by excessive use of force, particularly adolescent boys in high-risk areas. Expand community-based approaches to address denial of essential services following use of force, and support community mapping and plans to respond to instances of violence.

## DONORS AND MEMBER STATES

- Strengthen donor alignment with proactive protection approaches to protection including protection by presence, accompaniment, and community self-protection during 2026.
- Advance advocacy and dialogue for Israel to fulfil its international human rights obligations prohibiting the unnecessary, disproportionate or discriminatory use of force, including lethal force, and its obligations to ensure accountability.

## RISK 3

### Torture or cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment

#### GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

- Immediately end and thereafter prevent torture or other ill-treatment of all persons, during arrest and detention by ceasing the practice of night arrests, ensuring due process and fair trial guarantees and procedural safeguards for all Palestinians such as access to effective complaint procedures, and restoring access to lawyers, the ICRC, and family visits for men and boys deprived of their liberty. Ensure families are promptly informed about the fate and whereabouts of their detained family members, including through coordination with the ICRC.
- Ensure all allegations of torture or other ill-treatment, including sexual and other forms of GBV, are promptly, impartially, thoroughly and independently investigated, and that perpetrators are held to account.
- Ensure access by victims of gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law to adequate, effective and prompt reparation including restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition, and ensure accountability through impartial and independent investigation.

#### PROTECTION ACTORS

- Strengthen safe and confidential pathways for survivors of torture in 2026, and develop specialized trauma-informed care frameworks, strengthening supervision systems and expanding training for frontline workers that link MHPSS services with GBV, sexual and reproductive health (SRH), and youth programmes to foster a more holistic and survivor-centred approach to care, while leveraging existing structures to address intersecting vulnerabilities.
- Prioritise gender-sensitive training and the recruitment of male staff for programmes targeting men and boys to ensure services are accessible, trusted, and responsive to the specific risks, norms, and barriers faced by men and boys. Ensure child protection staff are trained in Q1 of 2026 on appropriate response to GBV and deliver targeted training on topics such as trauma-informed engagement with boys, responding to sexual violence against boys, and secondary trauma.
- Expand longer-term recovery and reintegration support, particularly for adolescent boys affected by torture or ill-treatment, including structured group-based interventions and mentoring approaches throughout 2026.
- Conduct feasibility assessment in Q1 of 2026 for implementing GBVIMS in the West Bank, initiating standardization of the safe and ethical classification of data on men and boys while strengthening evidence-based advocacy.

## RISK 4

### Unlawful impediments and restrictions on freedom of movement

#### GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL

- Immediately cease all policies and practices that constitute unlawful impediments and restrictions on freedom of movement, including ending and reversing settlement activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, in line with Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016) and the ICJ 19 July 2024 Advisory Opinion, lifting all restrictions on Palestinian movement and economic development, and ensuring the safe return and reintegration of those displaced.

#### DONORS AND MEMBER STATES

- Use diplomatic and political influence to demand Israel remove unlawful impediments and movement restrictions, restore freedom of movement for Palestinians and enable safe and predictable access to critical services and humanitarian assistance across the West Bank.

## HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

- Enhance community-led protection initiatives, early warning systems, and protective presence in high-risk areas, and enable MHPSS and strengthen housing, land, and property rights advocacy for displaced communities.
- Expand legal assistance programmes – including access to mobile legal aid services – and advocacy efforts to challenge policies contributing to forcible transfer, including principled petitions before the High Court of Israel to push for accountability for duty bearers and remedies for affected individuals and communities..

## RISK 5

### Psychological/emotional abuse or inflicted distress

#### DONORS AND MEMBER STATES

- Invest in strengthening the national system to respond to emergency protection and child protection needs, including for the provision of community-based and structured MHPSS, as well as specialised case management services for children affected by complex protection risks including violence.
- Provide multi-year, flexible funding during 2026 for protection and MHPSS programming to ensure continuity of care and age, gender and diversity-responsive interventions, particularly for boys exposed to cumulative trauma.

#### HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

- Expand community-based protection in conjunction with multisectoral synergies to improve access to MHPSS services in 2026, particularly when movement is restricted. Develop male-accessible MHPSS channels, including confidential group-based peer models, and specialised MHPSS support for children. Ensure integration of MHPSS services and prevention measures into community-based initiatives, including structured engagement with caregivers, educators, community leaders, and male role models as change agents to promote positive norms and behaviours, reduce vulnerabilities to self-harm, and strengthen protective environments for boys.
- Increase training for MHPSS, community-facing staff and frontline service providers on trauma informed approaches to ensure quality, ethical, and age, gender and diversity-appropriate service delivery during Q1 and Q2 of 2026.
- Scale-up engagement with men and boys as active allies in GBV prevention in 2026, expanding beyond sensitization to foster positive masculinity and encourage men to challenge harmful gender norms and prevent domestic violence.



## METHODOLOGY

The analysis has been based on both quantitative and qualitative data from existing secondary data sources, protection assessments and reports covering events from January to December 2025 in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Quantitative data include AoR partner reporting, case management records, and age-, sex-, and disability-disaggregated data captured through GBV and CPIMS+, which were analysed to assess patterns of risk exposure, service reach, referral, and continuity of support for children. Primary data collection was completed through surveys and interviews with protection partners and focus group discussions (FGDs) with men and boys. Stress drivers and risk ranking is based on qualitative analysis of a comprehensive survey of protection partners operating in the West Bank. Qualitative data includes analysis of FGDs completed by the Protection Cluster and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in October and November 2025 in Area C, Tulkarm, Nablus, and H2 area of Hebron. A 5W system for the OPT was launched in January 2023 to harmonise and standardize systems for the collection, management, analysis and use of data.



## LIMITATIONS

Due to spikes in violence, clashes, movement restrictions and deterioration in the coercive environment in certain parts of the West Bank, some partners have faced difficulties with consistent access and gathering in-depth and reliable data. Ongoing needs assessments, updated analysis of threats, impact and capacity will be used to regularly update the PAU.



For further information please contact the Protection Cluster | [ohchr-protectioncluster-opt@un.org](mailto:ohchr-protectioncluster-opt@un.org)

Child Protection AoR | [cpaorpalestine@unicef.org](mailto:cpaorpalestine@unicef.org)

GBV AoR: Anna Stone | [stone@unfpa.org](mailto:stone@unfpa.org)

Mine Action AoR | [katerynat@unops.org](mailto:katerynat@unops.org) and [j.edwards@hi.org](mailto:j.edwards@hi.org)

Legal Task Force: Nader Muaddi | [nader.muaddi@nrc.no](mailto:nader.muaddi@nrc.no)

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